

Court Reporters

Summary



Court reporters attend legal proceedings to create word-for-word transcriptions.

Quick Facts: Court Reporters	
2010 Median Pay	\$47,700 per year \$22.93 per hour
Entry-Level Education	Postsecondary non-degree award
Work Experience in a Related Occupation	None
On-the-job Training	Short-term on-the-job training
Number of Jobs, 2010	22,000
Job Outlook, 2010-20	14% (About as fast as average)
Employment Change, 2010-20	3,100

[What Court Reporters Do](#)

Court reporters attend legal proceedings and public speaking events to create word-for-word transcriptions. Some court reporters provide captioning for television and at public events.

[Work Environment](#)

Most court reporters work onsite for the government, in courts and legislatures. However, some work remotely in broadcast captioning from either their home or a central office.

[How to Become a Court Reporter](#)

Many community colleges and technical institutes offer postsecondary certificate programs for court reporters. Many states require court reporters who work in legal settings to be licensed.

[Pay](#)

The median annual wage for court reporters was \$47,700 in May 2010.

[Job Outlook](#)

Employment of court reporters is expected to grow by 14 percent from 2010 to 2020, as fast as the average for all occupations. Those with experience and training in techniques for helping deaf and hard-of-hearing people, such as real-time captioning and Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART), will have the best job prospects.

[Similar Occupations](#)

Compare the job duties, education, job growth, and pay of court reporters with similar occupations.

[O*NET](#)

O*NET provides comprehensive information on key characteristics of workers and occupations.

[Contacts for More Information](#)

Learn more about court reporters by contacting these additional resources.

What Court Reporters Do



Court reporters provide an accurate description of court proceedings.

Court reporters attend legal proceedings and public speaking events and create word-for-word transcriptions. Some court reporters provide captioning for television and at public events.

Duties

Court reporters typically do the following:

- Attend events that require written transcripts
- Record spoken dialogue with specialized equipment, such as covered microphones
- Report gestures and actions
- Review notes for names of speakers and technical terminology
- Prepare transcripts for the record
- Edit transcripts for typographical errors
- Provide copies of transcripts and recordings to the courts, counsels, and parties involved

Court reporters create word-for-word transcripts of speeches, conversations, legal proceedings, meetings, and other events. They play a critical role in legal proceedings and other meetings where it is important to have a record of exactly what was said. They are responsible for producing a complete, accurate, and secure legal record.

Court reporters who work in courts also help judges and trial attorneys by organizing the official record and searching for information in it.

Other court reporters do not work in courtrooms. They also transcribe speech to writing as the speech occurs. However, they primarily serve people who cannot hear the spoken word by providing captions for television programs (called *closed captioning*). They may also transcribe speech for deaf and hard-of-hearing people in meetings.

Court reporters who work with deaf and hard-of-hearing people turn speech into writing. For information on workers who help deaf and hard-of-hearing people through sign language, cued speech, and other spoken or gestural means, see the profile on [interpreters and translators](#).

Court reporters often specialize in a specific method of recording, such as using stenotype machines, steno masks (covered microphones), or digital recording.

Stenotype machine. Court reporters use stenotype machines to record dialogue as it is spoken. Stenotype machines work like keyboards but create words through key combinations rather than single characters, allowing court reporters to keep up with fast-moving dialogue. Court reporters who use stenotype machines are known as *stenographers*.

As with a regular keyboard, the symbols are recorded in a computer program. The program uses computer-assisted transcription (CAT) to translate the key combinations into the words and phrases they represent, creating readable text. The court reporter then reviews the text for accuracy and corrects spelling and grammar errors.

Steno mask. Court reporters who use steno masks speak directly into a covered microphone, recording dialogue and reporting gestures and actions. Because the microphone is covered, others cannot hear what the reporter is saying. The recording is converted by computerized voice-recognition software into a transcript that the court reporter reviews for accuracy, spelling, and grammar.

For both stenotype machine recording and steno mask recording, court reporters must create and maintain the online dictionary that the computer uses to transcribe the key presses or voice recordings into text. For example, they may put in the names of people involved in the court case or specific words that are used in that type of meeting.

Digital recording. Digital recording creates an audio, rather than a written, transcript. Court reporters who use digital recorders operate and monitor the recording equipment. They also take notes to identify the speakers and provide context. In some cases, the reporter uses the audio recording to create a written transcript.

Court reporters who work with deaf and hard-of-hearing people use a technique called Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART). They go with their clients to events, doctor's appointments, or wherever they are needed. These court reporters also caption high school and college classes and provide transcripts to students who are hard-of-hearing or learning English as a second language. They also sometimes work remotely because an Internet or phone connection allows them to hear and type without having to be in the room.

Work Environment



Court reporters may work in courtrooms or office buildings.

Court reporters held about 22,000 jobs in 2010. The following industries employed the most court reporters in 2010:

State government, excluding education and hospitals	31%
Business support services	27
Local government, excluding education and hospitals	25
Information	1

Most court reporters work for state and local governments, in courts and legislatures. Others work as freelance reporters for pretrial depositions and other events. Some captioners work remotely from their home, although others work from a central office.

Work Schedules

Court reporters generally work full time recording events and preparing transcripts. Freelance reporters have more flexibility in setting their schedules.

How to Become a Court Reporter



Court reporters must give their full attention to the speaker and capture every word that is said.

Many community colleges and technical institutes offer postsecondary certificate programs for court reporters. Many states require court reporters who work in legal settings to be licensed.

Education

Many court reporters receive formal training at community colleges or technical institutes. There are different programs for the different transcription methods. Programs in using steno masks and in digital recording typically last 6 months and lead to a certificate. Programs in stenography, in which students are taught to use stenotype machines, last about 2 to 4 years and often lead to an associate's degree.

Most programs include courses in English grammar and phonetics, legal procedures, and terminology. Students also practice preparing transcripts to improve speed and accuracy.

Licenses and Certification

Many states require court reporters who work in legal settings to be licensed. License requirements vary by method of court reporting.

The [National Court Reporters Association](#) (NCRA) offers certification for court reporters and broadcast captioners. Certification as a Registered Professional Reporter (RPR) includes a written test and a skills test, in which court reporters must type at least 225 words per minute.

Currently, 22 states currently accept or use the RPR in place of a state certification or licensing exam.

Digital and voice reporters also may obtain certification.

Training

After completing their formal program, court reporters must complete short-term on-the-job training.

To maintain their certification with the NCRA, court reporters must complete continuing education and online training.

Specific continuing education requirements to maintain state licensure can be found by going to the state association's website.

Important Qualities

Concentration skills. Court reporters must be able to concentrate for long periods. Even when there are distractions, they must remain focused on the dialogue they are recording.

Detail oriented. Court reporters create a transcript that serves as a legal record, so it must be mistake-free.

Listening skills. Court reporters must give their full attention to the speaker and capture every word that is said.

Writing skills. Court reporters need a good command of grammar, vocabulary, and punctuation.

Pay

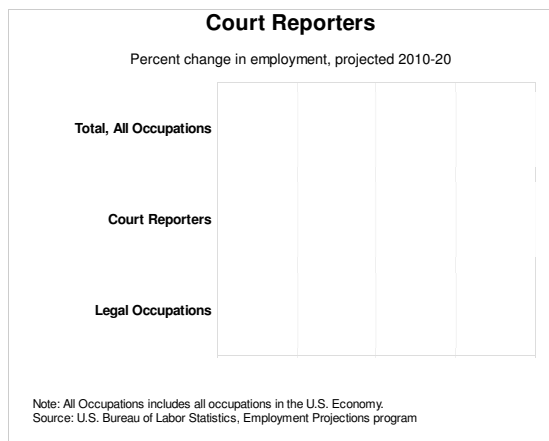
Court Reporters			
Median annual wages, May 2010			
Legal Occupations			
Court Reporters			
Total, All Occupations			
Note: All Occupations includes all occupations in the U.S. Economy. Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Occupational Employment Statistics			

The median annual wage for court reporters was \$47,700 in May 2010. The median wage is the wage at which half the workers in an occupation earned more than that amount and half earned less. The lowest 10 percent earned less than \$25,710, and the top 10 percent earned more than \$91,280.

Freelance court reporters are paid for their time but can also sell their transcripts per page for an additional profit.

Court reporters generally work full time recording events and preparing transcripts. Freelance reporters have more flexibility to set their schedule.

Job Outlook



Employment of court reporters is expected to grow by 14 percent from 2010 to 2020, as fast as the average for all occupations. Demand for court reporter services will be influenced by new federal legislation requiring increased captioning for the Internet and other technologies.

Reporters will increasingly be needed for captioning outside of legal proceedings. All new television programming will continue to need closed captioning, while broadcasters are adding closed captioning to their online programming in order to comply with new federal regulations.

Growth of the elderly population will also increase demand for court reporters who provide Communication Access Real-Time Translation (CART) services and can accompany their clients to doctor's appointments, town hall meetings, and religious services. In addition, movie theaters and sports stadiums will provide closed captioning for disabled customers.

Employment growth may be negatively affected by the increased use of digital audio recording technology (DART). Some states have already replaced court reporters with this technology, while some others are currently assessing the reliability, accuracy, and costs associated with installing and maintaining recorders.

Even with the increased use of DART, however, court reporters will still be needed to verify, check, and supervise the production of the transcripts after the proceedings have been digitally recorded. Despite the cost-savings that may be associated with DART, some state and federal courts may still prefer the quality provided by highly-trained court reporters.

Job prospects

Job prospects for graduates of court reporting programs are expected to be very good. Many training programs report that nearly all graduates are able to find jobs. Those with experience and training in CART and real-time captioning will have the best job prospects.



Employment projections data for court reporters, 2010-20

Occupational Title	SOC Code	Employment, 2010	Projected Employment, 2020	Change, 2010-20		Employment by Industry
				Percent	Numeric	
Court Reporters	23-2091	22,000	25,100	14	3,100	[XLS]

SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Employment Projections program

Similar Occupations

This table shows a list of occupations with job duties that are similar to those of court reporters.

OCCUPATION		JOB DUTIES	ENTRY-LEVEL EDUCATION ⓘ	2010 MEDIAN PAY ⓘ
 Interpreters and Translators		Interpreters and translators convert information from one language to another. Interpreters work in spoken or sign language, translators in written language.	Bachelor's degree	\$43,300
	 Medical Transcriptionists	Medical transcriptionists listen to voice recordings that physicians and other health professionals make and convert them into written reports. They interpret medical terminology and abbreviations in preparing patients' medical histories, discharge summaries, and other documents.	Postsecondary non-degree award	\$32,900

Contacts for More Information

For more information on becoming a court reporter, including training programs and certification as a Register Professional Reporters, visit

[National Court Reporters Association](#)

For more information on certification and legal resources, as well as becoming an electronic/digital reporter, visit

[American Association of Electronic Reporters](#)

For more information on voice writing and certification, visit

[National Verbatim Reporters Association](#)

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